

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 534

CS 217 600

AUTHOR Wray, David
TITLE Developing Factual Writing: An Approach through Scaffolding.
PUB DATE 2001-07-00
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the European Reading Conference (12th, Dublin, Ireland, July 1-4, 2001).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Writing; Classroom Techniques; Elementary Education; *Nonfiction; *Scaffolding (Teaching Technique); *Writing Instruction; *Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS Genre Approach

ABSTRACT

Most teachers would agree that children should undertake a wide range of types of non-fiction writing, but there are many questions about how this aim should be achieved and about how teachers can help children learn about the various structural demands of particular writing forms. "Writing frames" are one strategy which can help children use the generic structures of recounts, reports, instructions, explanations, persuasion, and instructions until they become familiar enough with these written structures to have assimilated them into their independent writing repertoire. A writing frame consists of a skeleton outline to scaffold children's non-fiction writing. The writing frames concentrate on the six types of non-fiction genres identified by the Australian genre theorists, Christie (1989), Martin and Rothery (1986), and Rothery and Callaghan (1989). Children experience problems in practicing non-fiction writing. Writing frames are helpful to children of all ages and particularly useful with children of average writing ability and with those who find writing difficult. Use of a writing frame should always begin with discussion and teacher modeling, and not all children in a class will need to use a writing frame. Contains 21 references and some sample writing frames. (NKA)

Developing Factual Writing: An Approach through Scaffolding.

by

David Wray

Paper presented at the European Reading Conference (12th, Dublin, Ireland, July 1-4, 2001).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

D. Wray

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Developing Factual Writing: An Approach Through Scaffolding

David Wray
University of Warwick, United Kingdom

Introduction

Most teachers would agree that children should undertake a wide range of types of non-fiction writing and that they should be 'helped to plan and produce these types of writing by being given purposeful opportunities to write their own.' (D.E.S.1990.) Yet there are many questions about how this aim should be achieved and about how teachers can help children learn about the various structural demands of particular writing forms. As part of the work of the Nuffield Exeter Extending Literacy (EXEL) project we have found that the use of writing frames is one strategy which can help children use the generic structures of recounts, reports, instructions, explanations, persuasion and discussion until they become familiar enough with these written structures to have assimilated them into their independent writing repertoire.

What are writing frames?

A writing frame consists of a skeleton outline to scaffold children's non-fiction writing. The skeleton framework consists of different key words or phrases, according to the particular generic form. The template of starters, connectives and sentence modifiers which constitute a writing frame gives children a structure within which they can concentrate on communicating what they want to say, rather than getting lost in the form. However, by using the form, children become increasingly familiar with it.

How writing frames can help

The work of various educationalists and psychologists (Cairney 1990, Cudd and Roberts 1989, Bereiter and Scardamalia 1985) suggested to us that children's early attempts at non-fiction writing might successfully be scaffolded by framing structures. We worked with teachers throughout the country to evolve and trial writing frames for use in the classroom. The frames have been used with children throughout the primary and lower secondary years and across the full range of abilities, including children with special needs.

Writing frames can help children by:-

- providing experience of a range of generic structures,
- offering a structure in which the given connectives maintain the cohesive ties of the text thus helping pupils maintain the 'sense' of what they are writing,
- offering a varied vocabulary of connectives and sentence beginnings thus extending children's experience beyond the familiar 'and then',

- encouraging pupils to give a personal interpretation of the information they have gathered by the careful use of personal pronouns. It is tempting to talk about this process in terms of giving children ownership of the information they are working with,
- asking the children to select, and think about what they have learnt, by encouraging pupils to re-order information and demonstrate their understanding rather than just copying out text,
- enabling all pupils to achieve some success at writing, a vital ingredient in improving self-esteem and motivation,
- preventing pupils from being presented with a blank sheet of paper - a particularly daunting experience for some children especially those for whom sustained writing is difficult,
- giving children an overview of the writing task.

Non-fiction Genres

There are many different genres of writing, and writing can contain elements of more than one genre but our writing frames concentrate on the six main types of non-fiction genres identified by the Australian genre theorists (Christie, 1989, Martin and Rothery, 1986, Rothery and Callaghan, 1989). The six genres they identified - recount, report, explanation, discussion, exposition (we have called this persuasion) and procedure (which we call instructions) - were arrived at after the analysis of many texts. They also discovered from analysing children's writing that much of the writing undertaken in schools was in the form of recounts with the other genres relatively neglected. Within each genre they analysed the 'typical' structure of the texts and it is this analysis of the different generic structures that has helped shape the formats of the writing frames.

The problems of writing non-fiction.

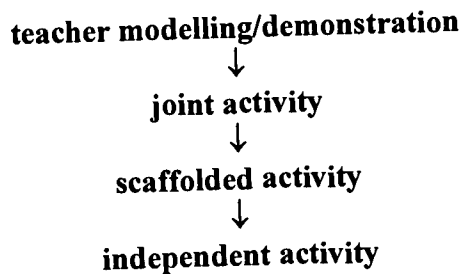
Some children appear to find non-fiction writing problematic compared to writing narrative. There are several reasons why this may be so. Some reasons have to do with the features of non-fiction texts themselves and others may stem from the model of teaching we offer our pupils.

Features of non-fiction texts

Children, it is often claimed, lack experience of the different genres of non-fiction and their organisational structures (Winograd and Bridge, 1986; Littlefair, 1991). They find the linguistic features (vocabulary, connectives, cohesion, register) more difficult to comprehend and write than those of the more familiar narrative texts (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Perera, 1984; Anderson and Armbruster, 1981; Littlefair, 1991). This textual inexperience affects children's non-fiction writing. The frames offer children support in becoming familiar with all these features.

A model for teaching

The model of teaching upon which we have based the work of the EXEL project is summarised in the following diagram.



This model arises from the ideas of Vygotsky (1978), who put forward the notion that children first experience a particular cognitive activity in collaboration with expert practitioners. The child is firstly a spectator as the majority of the cognitive work is done by the expert (parent or teacher), then a novice as he/she starts to take over some of the work under the close supervision of the expert. As the child grows in experience and capability of performing the task, the expert passes over greater and greater responsibility but still acts as a guide, assisting the child at problematic points. Eventually, the child assumes full responsibility for the task with the expert still present in the role of a supportive audience. The model seems to make good theoretical sense, yet it can be a little difficult to apply it fully to teaching in a busy, over-populated classroom. In particular, it seems that children are too often expected to move into the independent writing phase before they are really ready and often the pressure to do so is based on the practical problem of teachers being unable to find the time to spend with them in individual support. What is needed is something to span the joint activity and independent activity phase.

We have called this the scaffolded phase - a phase where we offer our pupils strategies to aid writing but strategies that they can use without an adult necessarily being alongside them. Writing frames are one such strategy. The frames can act both as a way of increasing a child's experience of a particular type of non-fiction writing and as a substitute for the teacher's direct interventions which encourage children to extend their writing.

How to use the frames

Use of the frame should always begin with discussion and teacher modelling before moving on to joint construction (teacher and child/ren together) and then to the child undertaking writing supported by the frame. This oral, teacher modelling, joint construction pattern of teaching is vital for it not only models the generic form and teaches the words that signal connections and transitions but it also provides opportunities for developing children's oral language and their thinking. Some children, especially children with learning difficulties may need many oral sessions and sessions in which their teacher acts as a scribe before they are ready to attempt their own writing.

It would be useful for teachers to make 'big' versions of the frames for use in the teacher modelling and joint construction phases. These large frames can be used for shared writing. It is important that the child and the teacher understand that the frame is a supportive draft and words may be crossed out or substituted. Extra sentences may be added or surplus starters crossed out. The frame should be treated as a flexible aid not a rigid form.

When to use the frames

We are convinced that writing in a range of genres is most effective if it is located in meaningful experiences. The concept of 'situated learning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) suggests that learning is always context-dependent. For this reason, we have always used the frames within class topic work rather than in isolated study skills lessons (Lewis and Wray, 1994). British primary school teaching is still largely based on this model of curriculum planning and we would argue very strongly for its potential effectiveness.

We do not advocate using the frames for the direct teaching of generic structures in skills-centred lessons. The frame itself is never a purpose for writing.

There is much debate about the appropriateness of the direct teaching of generic forms (Barrs, 1991/2; Cairney, 1992) and we share many of the reservations expressed by such commentators. Our use of a writing frame always arose from the child having a purpose for undertaking some writing and the appropriate frame was then introduced if the child needed extra help.

When the child/ren have a purpose for writing you may decide to offer them a frame,

- when they first attempt independent writing in an unfamiliar genre and a scaffold might be helpful to them.
- when a child/group of children appear stuck in a particular mode of writing e.g. constantly using 'and then'....'and then' when writing an account.
- when they 'wander' between genres in a way that demonstrates a lack of understanding of a particular genre usage. e.g. whilst writing an instructional text such as a recipe they start in the second person (First you beat the egg) but then shift into a recount (Next I stirred in the flour). Mixing genres can of course be a deliberate and creative decision. We must take care to differentiate between those occasions when a child purposely moves between genres and those where different genres are confused.
- when they have written something in one genre (often a personal recount) which would be more appropriate in a different genre, e.g. writing up a science experiment as a personal recount. Although writing accounts from personal experience is a vital part of the process of becoming a writer (cf. Britten's work on the expressive mode) we must judge when a child needs help in adopting other genres.

In all of these situations we would stress that writing frames are just one of a range of strategies and writing experiences a teacher would offer to assist the children.

Using the frames with a range of writers

We have found the frames helpful to children of all ages and all abilities (indeed their wide applicability is one of their features). However, teachers have found the frames particularly useful with children of average writing ability and with those who find writing difficult. Teachers have commented on the improved quality (and quantity) of writing that has resulted from using the frames with these children.

It would of course be unnecessary to use the frame with writers already confident and fluent in a particular genre but they can be used to introduce such writers to new genres. Teachers have noted an initial dip in the quality of the writing when comparing the framed 'new genre' writing with the fluent recount writing of an able child. What they have later discovered, however, is that, after only one or two uses of a frame, fluent language users add the genre and its language features to their repertoires and, without using a frame, produce fluent writing of high quality in the genre.

The aim with all children is for them to reach this stage of assimilating the generic structures and language features into their writing repertoires.

From scaffolding to independence

Children need to use the frames less and less as their knowledge of a particular form increases. At this later stage, when children begin to show evidence of independent usage, the teacher may need only to have a master copy of the frames available as help cards for those occasions when children need a prompt. A box of such help cards could be a part of the writing area in which children are encouraged to refer to many different aids to their writing. Such a support fits with the general 'procedural facilitation' strategy for children's writing suggested by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987). It also seems to be a way into encouraging children to begin to make independent decisions about their own learning.

Final points to remember

- Use of a frame should always begin with discussion and teacher modelling before moving on to joint construction and then to the child undertaking writing supported by the frame.
- Not all the children in a class will need to use a writing frame.
- The use of a writing frame should arise when a child has a purpose for undertaking some writing and the appropriate frame is introduced if the child needs extra support. The frame in itself is never a purpose for writing.
- It should be made clear to the children that the frame is just a draft and they should be encouraged to cross out, amend and add to the frame as suits them.

- Frames are only a small part of the varied and rich writing experiences we offer children. They will need wide experience of text written in a range of genres as well as opportunities to write in a variety of contexts.
- Generic structures are not rigid, unchangeable forms. It is not appropriate to teach them in this way.

Some example writing frames

We have space here for only a few examples of the writing frames we have developed. Further, photocopiable, examples can be found in Lewis & Wray (1997) and a more extensive account of the thinking behind writing frames in Lewis & Wray (1995).

Recount genre

Before I read about this topic I thought that
 But when I read about it I learnt that
 I also learnt that
 Furthermore I learnt that
 The final thing I learnt was that

Explanation genre

I want to explain why
 There are many reasons for this. The chief reason is
 Another reason is
 A further reason is
 So now you can see why

Persuasion genre

Some people argue that
 But I want to argue that
 I have several reasons for arguing for this point of view. My first reason is
 Another reason is
 Furthermore
 Therefore, although some people argue that
 I think I have shown that

References

- Anderson, T.H. and Armbruster, B.B. (1981) *Content Area Textbooks*. (Reading Education Report no.24). University of Illinois: Center for the Study of Reading.
- Barrs, M. (1991/2) "Genre Theory. What's it all about?" *Language Matters*. No 1. London: C.L.P.E.
- Bereiter, C. and Scardamalia, M. (1985) "Children's difficulties in learning to compose." In Wells, G. and Nicholls, J. (eds) *Language and Learning: An Interactive Perspective*. Basingstoke: Falmer Press.
- Bereiter, C. and Scardamalia, M. (1987) *The Psychology of Written Composition*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Britton, J. et al. (1975) *The development of writing abilities*. London: Macmillan.
- Cairney, T. (1990) *Teaching Reading Comprehension*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Cairney, T. (1992) Mountain or Molehill: The genre debate viewed from 'Down Under' *Reading* vol.26 no.1.
- Christie, F. (1989) *Writing in Schools*. Geelong: Deakin University Press.
- Cudd, E.T. & Roberts, L. (1989) "Using writing to enhance content area learning in the primary grades". *The Reading Teacher*, vol 42. no.6.
- DES (1990) *English in the National Curriculum*. London: H.M.S.O.
- Halliday, M.A.K. & Hasan, R. (1976) *Cohesion in English* London: Longman.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, M. Wray, D. & Rospigliosi, P. (1994) And I want it in your own words', *The Reading Teacher*, 47 (7) 528-36
- Lewis, M. & Wray, D. (1995) *Developing children's non-fiction writing* Leamington Spa: Scholastic
- Lewis, M. & Wray, D. (1997) *Writing Frames* Reading: University of Reading Reading and Language Information Centre
- Littlefair, A. (1991) *Reading all Types of Writing* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Martin, J. & Rothery, J. (1986) *Writing Project Report No. 4* Sydney: Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney.
- Perera, K. (1984) *Children's Reading and Writing* Oxford: Blackwell.
- Rothery, J. & Callaghan, M. (1988) *Teaching Factual Writing: A genre based approach*. Report of the D.S.P. Literacy Project. Metropolitan East Region. Sydney: N.S.W Department of Education.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society: The development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass.
- Winograd, P. & Bridge, C. (1986) "The comprehension of important information in written prose" in Baumann, J. F. (Ed) *Teaching Main Idea Comprehension*. Newark, Delaware: Internat



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
(OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



Reproduction Release

(Specific Document)

CS 217 600

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Developing factual writing: an approach through scaffolding	
Author(s): David Wray	
Corporate Source: University of Warwick, United Kingdom	Publication Date: 2001

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign in the indicated space following.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Level 1	Level 2A	Level 2B
<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

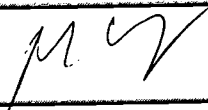
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic) and paper copy.

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche, or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: 	Printed Name/Position/Title: Professor David Wray	
Organization/Address: Institute of Education University of Warwick Coventry, CV4 7AL United Kingdom	Telephone: +44 2476 522057	Fax:
	E-mail Address: d.j.wray@warwick.ac.uk	Date: 19 July 2001

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address: